

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUITO 01635 111458Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P R 111355Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3496
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ
DIA WASHDC
JCS WASHDC

S E C R E T QUITO 1635

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PINR MPOL PFOR PE BL CI EC
SUBJ: RESPONSE TO INTELLIGENCE ANALYSES ON POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT
IN ANDEAN REGION

REF: A) INR REPORT 682, JAN 12, 1977 B) NIO IIM 76-046,
DEC 1976

1. THE EMBASSY COUNTRY TEAM HAS SOME RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE ANALYSES AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE TWO REFERENCED INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY ESTIMATES AND IS FORWARDING OUR OBSERVATIONS IN GREATER DETAIL IN THE FORM OF QUITO A-14 DATED MARCH 15, 1977. MEANWHILE, THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTS AN ABSTRACT OF THE AIRGRAM AND PRESENTS OUR CONCERNS IN ABBREVIATED FORM. EMBASSY WOULD WELCOME ANY COMMENTS FROM THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY OR OTHER END-USERS WHEN THE AIRGRAM IS RECEIVED.

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2. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THERE EXISTS A CONVINCING SYLLOGISM WHICH BEGINS WITH PERU LOSING A WAR TO CHILE, NURSING A GRUDGE BUT FRUSTRATED FOR 100 YEARS IN THE FACE OF CHILEAN MILITARY SUPERIORITY, AND THEN FINALLY BEING ABLE TO REVERSE THE BALANCE OF MILITARY POWER. WE FURTHER BELIEVE THAT THE PROPOSITION IS SUFFICIENTLY STRONG TO PRECLUDE DISMISSING THE POSSIBILITY OF WAR AS NO MORE THAN FAINT IN THE ABSENCE OF

RATHER CONVINCING EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY AND ESPECIALLY IN THE FACE OF PERSISTENT THREADS WHICH TEND TO FORTIFY THAT POSSIBILITY.

3. THE STRONGEST THREAD IS THAT THE KIND AND QUANTITY OF ARMS THAT PERU HAS AND IS ACQUIRING BELIES THE CLAIM THAT THEY ARE INTENDED FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES, OR MERELY TO REPLACE OBSOLETE EQUIPMENT. IN FACT, THEY ARE ADMIRABLY SUITED FOR A LIGHTNING FIRST-STRIKE THROUGH THE ATACAMES DESERT. ANOTHER THREAD IS THE EXISTENCE OF PERUVIAN WAR PLANS AND ALTERNATE STRATEGY AND MOBILIZATION PLANS WHICH DEVOTE DISPROPORTIONATE ATTENTION TO OFFENSIVE WAR AGAINST ITS NEIGHBORS. WHILE THESE ELEMENTS CERTAINLY DO NOT RULE OUT OTHER EXPLANATIONS OF PERUVIAN INTENTIONS, THE POTENT INFERENCETHAT CAN BE DRAWN FROM THEM IS LOGICALLY RESPECTABLE. UNFORTUNATELY IT IS NOT ADDRESSED IN EITHER INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT.

4. EMBASSY FEELS THAT THE RATIONALIZATIONS FOR THE ASSUMPTION THAT PERU WILL NOT ATTACK ARE IMAGINATIVE, BUT CERTAINLY NOT AS PERSUASIVE AS THEY OUGHT TO BE TO EXCLUDE THE ALTERNATE CONCLUSION. THE PRESENCE OF STRONG REVANCHIST SENTIMENT WITHIN THE MILITARY IS CITED AS A REASON WHY THE LEADERSHIP HAS TO PLACATE WITH ARMS PURCHASES, BUT A SERIOUS DISCUSSION OF THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF REVANCHISM IS OMITTED. WHILE MUCH IS MADE OF THE "MODERATION" OF MORALES BERMUDEZ AS A RESTRAINING FACTOR, ONE IS LEFT TO BE PERSUADED THAT RELATIVE MODERATION IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS NECESSARILY CARRIES OVER INTO PERU'S NATIONALIST DISPUTE WITH CHILE. MOREOVER, DESPITE SO MUCH STORE IN MORALES BERMUDEZ, THERE IS LITTLE DISCUSSION
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ABOUT HIS CHANCES OF ENDURING IN HIS POSITION AND ABOUT THE ATTITUDES OF THOSE WHO MIGHT FOLLOW HIM.

5. EMB WAS IMPRESSED MORE WITH ARGUMENT MADE ABOUT DIFFICULTY IN ASSIMILATING NEW MILITARY EQUIPMENT AS A RESTRAINT, (ALBET, BY DEFINITION, A TEMPORARY ONE), BUT THE ARGUMENT IS WEAKENED BY THE FAILURE TO INDICATE WHETHER THE ASSESSMENT WAS BASED ON CONCRETE STUDIES OF PERUVIAN CAPABILITY, OR ON ROUGH CONJECTURE, AND, PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT, WHAT THE PERUVIANS THEMSELVES PERCEIVE AS THEIR CAPABILITY.

6. EMB IS STRUCK BY ABSENCE OF DETERRENTS OR CONSTRAINTS TO PERUVIAN ACTIONS WITH REGARD TO INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS. WHILE INR STUDY SUGGESTS THAT OAS COULD INTERVENE WITHIN A FEW DAYS, THE LIGHTNING STRIKE THESIS SUGGESTS PERU COULD OCCUPY WHAT IT WANTS TO WITHIN THAT PERIOD. FOREIGN FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, HOLDING HUNDREDS OF MILLION DOLLARS OF PERUVIAN PAPER, ARE SIMILARLY UNLIKELY TO BE AN EFFECTIVE SOURCE OF SANCTIONS IF PERU INITIATES WAR.

7. MUCH IS MADE IN BOTH PAPERS OF DIPLOMATIC FENCE-BUILDING EFFORTS BY THE RIVAL PARTIES AS INDICATION THAT SITUATION IS UNDER CONTROL. IF THE DANGER CONSISTED OF DIPLOMATIC FRICTIONS LEADING TO SPARKS, THIS WOULD BE VALID, BUT IF WE ARE FACED WITH A CALCULATED, WELL-PLANNED AGGRESSIVE STRATEGY OF REALIZING NATIONAL AMBITIONS THROUGH MILITARY CONQUEST, THE PROXIMITY OF AN ATTACK COULD NOT BE PREDICTED THROUGH READING A FEVER CHART OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

8. IN CONCLUSION, WHILE WE WISH TO MAKE VERY CLEAR THAT WE ARE NOT PREDICTING THAT PERU WILL ATTACK ITS NEIGHBORS, WE DO SUBMIT THE POSSIBILITY THAT IF PERU HAS NOT DECIDED ON ITS FINAL COURSE, IT HAS AT LEAST EMBARKED UPON PREPARATIONS DESIGNED TO PRODUCE A REALISTIC OPTION OF A SUCCESSFUL FIRST STRIKE ATTACK. IF THE PRESENT REGIONAL MILITARY IMBALANCE CONTINUES TO GROW AND THE INTERNATIONAL AMBIENCE REMAINS
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UNCHANGED, PERU MAY FIND ITSELF WITHIN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE IN A POSITION TO EMBARK UPON A MILITARY ADVENTURE WITH EXTREMELY HIGH ODDS OF MILITARY AND POLITICAL SUCCESS. WHEN KIND OF PRESSURES WILL BE PLACED ON PERU'S LEADERSHIP TO TAKE SUCH A STEP AT THAT POINT, AND WHAT GUARANTEES ARE THERE THAT IT WILL BE WILLING OR ABLE TO RESIST THOSE PRESSURES?.
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